THE

Folly of Atheism,

And (what is now called) *DEISM*;

Even with Respect to the *Present Life*.

A

SERMON

Preached in the

Church of S^t. *Martin in the Fields*,

March the VII. 169½.

Being the First of the Lecture Founded by the Honourable *ROBERT BOYLE*, Esquire.

By *RICHARD BENTLEY*, M.A.

Chaplain to the Right Reverend Father in God,

EDWARD, Lord Bishop of *Worcester*.

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To my moſt Honoured Patrons,

TRUSTEES appointed by the Will of the

Honourable *ROBERT BOYLE*, Eſq;

The Right Reverend Father in God, *Thomas*,

Lord Biſhop of *Lincoln.*

Sir *Henry Aſhurſt*, K^t and Baronet.

Sir *John Rotheram*, Serjeant at Law.

John Evelyn, ſenior, Eſquire.

Moſt Honoured,

GOD *having diſpoſed the Heart of that incomparable Perſon, the Honourable* Robert Boyle, *Eſquire, lately deceaſed, the Glory of our Nation and Age, whoſe Charity and Goodneſs were as univerſal as his Learning and Fame*; 'To ſettle an Annual 'Salary for ſome Divine or Preaching Mini-'ſter, who ſhall be enjoyned to perform the 'Offices following: 1. To preach Eight Ser-'mons in the Year, for proving the Chriſtian 'Religion againſt notorious Infidels, viz. *A-'theiſts, Deiſts, Pagans, Jews and Mahometans*;

'not deſcending to any Controverſies that are 'among Chriſtians themſelves: Theſe Lec- 'tures to be on the *Firſt Monday* of the re- 'ſpective Months of *January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November*; in 'ſuch Church as the Truſtees ſhall from 'time to time appoint: 2. To be aſſiſting 'to all Companies, and encouraging them 'in any Undertaking for propagating the 'Chriſtian Religion: 3. To be ready to 'ſatisfie ſuch Real Scruples as any may 'have concerning thoſe Matters; and to an- 'ſwer ſuch New Objections or Difficulties 'as may be ſtated, to which good Anſwers 'have not yet been made: *You have been pleaſed to believe me able in ſome meaſure to perform theſe Offices, and to command this Firſt Eſſay to be made publick. I am very ſenſible of the great Honour, as well as the great Extent and Difficulty of the Task; and ſhall endeavour to the utmoſt of my poor ability to anſwer the religious and generous Deſign of that Excellent Perſon, and the good Opinion you have entertained of,*

My moſt Honoured Patrons,

Your very obliged and humble Servant,

R. Bentley.

THE Folly of Atheiſm, &c.

Pſalm XIV. v. 1.

The Fool hath ſaid in his Heart, There is no God; they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good.

I Shall not now make any enquiry about the time and occaſion and other circumſtances of compoſing this *Pſalm*: nor how it comes to paſs, that with very little variation we have it twice over, both here the 14th. and again number the 53d. Not that theſe and ſuch-like are not important conſiderations in themſelves; but that I think them improper now, when we are to argue and expoſtulate with ſuch perſons, as allow no Divine Authority to our Text; and profeſs no greater, or, it may be they will ſay, leſs Veneration for theſe Sacred Hymns, than for the profane Songs of *Ana-*

creon or *Horace.* So that although I my ſelf do really believe, that all ſuch as *ſay in their Hearts, There is no God,* are *fooliſh* and *corrupt,* both in Underſtanding and Will; becauſe I ſee that infinite Wiſdom himſelf has pronounced them to be ſo: nevertheleſs this Argument would at preſent have no force upon theſe men, till in due time and method we have evinced the ſufficient Authority of Holy Scripture. But however there are other Books extant, which they muſt needs allow of as proper Evidence; even the mighty Volumes of viſible Nature, and the everlaſting Tables of Right Reaſon; wherein, if they do not wilfully ſhut their eyes, they may read their own Folly written by the Finger of God in a much plainer and more terrible Sentence, than *Belſhazzar's* was by the Hand upon the Wall.

Dan. 5. 5.

And as the impious Principles of theſe perſons do preclude any argumentation from the Revealed Word of God: ſo they prevent us alſo from ſpeaking at preſent to the ſecond part of the *Text.* The whole verſe hath apparently two propoſitions; the one denoting the *Folly* of Atheiſm, *The Fool hath ſaid in his Heart, There is no God:* the ſecond declaring the

the *Corruption* and Flagitiousness of Life that naturally attend it, *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good.* Now this latter part to a genuine Atheist is meer *Jargon*, as they love to call it; an empty sound of words without any signification. He allows no Natural Morality, nor any other distinction of Good and Evil, Just and Unjust; than as Human Institution and the modes and fashions of various Countries do denominate them. The most Heroical Actions or detestable Villanies are in the nature of the things indifferent to his approbation; if by secrecy they are alike conceal'd from Rewards or Punishments, from Ignominy or Applause. So that till we have proved in its proper place the eternal and essential Difference between Virtue and Vice; we must forbear to urge Atheists with the *Corruption* and *Abominableness* of their Principles. But I presume, the first part of the Text, the *Folly and sottishness of Atheism* (which shall be the subject of this discourse) will be allowed to come home to their Case: since they make such a noisy pretence to Wit and Sagacity; and I believe several of them first engage in that Labyrinth of Nonsense and Folly out of

an abſurd and prepoſterous affectation of ſeeming Wiſer than their neighbours.

But before I proceed any farther, it will be neceſſary to clear and vindicate this expreſſion of the *Pſalmiſt*, *The Fool hath ſaid in his Heart*, *There is no God*. For I know not any Interpreters, that will allow it to be ſpoken of ſuch, as *flatly deny* the Being of God; but of them that believing his Exiſtence, do yet ſeclude him from directing the Affairs of the World, from obſerving and judging the Actions of Men. I ſuppoſe they might be induced to this, from the commonly received notion of an Innate Idea of God, imprinted upon every Soul of Man at their Creation, in Characters that can never be defaced. Whence it will follow, that Speculative Atheiſm doth ſubſiſt only in *our* ſpeculation; whereas really Human Nature cannot be guilty of the crime: that indeed a few ſenſual and voluptuous Perſons may for a ſeaſon eclipſe this native Light of the Soul; but can never ſo wholly ſmother and extinguiſh it, but that at ſome lucid intervals it will recover it ſelf again, and ſhine forth to the conviction of their Conſcience. And therefore they believed, that the words would not admit of a ſtrict and rigorous interpretation;

pretation; but ought to be ſo temper'd and accommodated to the nature of things, as that they may deſcribe thoſe profane perſons; who, though they *do not, nor cannot* really doubt *in their hearts* of the *Being* of God, yet do openly deny his *Providence* in the courſe of their lives Now if this be all that is meant by the *Text*, I do not ſee how we can defend not only the fitneſs and propriety, but the very truth of the expreſſion. As to that natural and indeleble ſignature of God, which Human Souls in their firſt Origin are ſuppoſed to be ſtamp'd with, I ſhall ſhew at a fitter opportunity, that it is a miſtake, and that we have no need of it in our Diſputes againſt Atheiſm. So that being free from that prejudice, I interpret the words of the *Text* in the literal acceptation, which will likewiſe take in the Expoſitions of others. For I believe that the Royal Pſalmiſt in this comprehenſive brevity of ſpeech, *There is no God*, hath concluded all the various Forms of Impiety; whether of ſuch as excludes the Deity from governing the World by his Providence, or judging it by his Righteouſneſs, or creating it by his Wiſdom and Power. Becauſe the conſequence and reſult of *all* theſe Opinions

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is terminated in down-right Atheiſm. For the Divine Inſpection into the affairs of the World doth neceſſarily follow from the Nature and Being of God. And he that denies this, doth implicitly deny his Exiſtence: he may acknowledge what he will with his mouth, but *in his heart he hath ſaid, There is no God. A God, therefore a Providence*; was a general argument of virtuous men, and not peculiar to the *Stoics* alone. And again, *No Providence, therefore no God*; was the moſt plauſible reaſon, and the moſt frequent in the mouths of Atheiſtical men. So that it ſeems to be agreed on all hands, that the Exiſtence of God and his Government of the World do mutually ſuppoſe and imply one another.

There are ſome Infidels among us, that not only disbelieve the *Chriſtian* Religion; but impugn the aſſertion of a *Providence*, of the *Immortality* of the Soul, of an Univerſal *Judgment* to come, and of any *Incorporeal* Eſſence: and yet to avoid the odious name of *Atheiſts*, would ſhelter and skreen themſelves under a new one of *Deiſts*, which is not quite ſo obnoxious. But I think the *Text* hath cut them ſhort, and precluded this ſubterfuge; in as much as it hath declared, that all ſuch wicked

wicked Principles are coincident and all one in the iſſue with the rankeſt Atheiſm: *The Fool*, that doth exempt the affairs of the World from the ordination and diſpoſal of God, *hath ſaid in his Heart, There is no God* at all. It was the opinion of many of the Ancients, that *Epicurus* introduced a *Deity* into his Philoſophy, not becauſe he was perſuaded of his Exiſtence, (for when he had brought him upon the Stage of Nature, he made him only *Muta perſona*, and interdicted him from bearing any Part in it,) but purely that he might not incurr the offence of the Government. Wherefore he was generally ſuſpected *Verbis reliquiſſe Deum, re ſuſtuliſſe*; to have framed on purpoſe ſuch a contemptible paultry *Hypotheſis* about him, as indeed left the Name and Title of God in the World; but nothing of his Nature and Power. Juſt as a Philoſopher of our own age gave a ludicrous and fictitious notion about the *Reſt of the Earth*, to evade the hard cenſure and uſage, which *Galileo* had lately met with. For my own part, as I do not exclude this reaſon from being a grand occaſion of *Epicurus*'s Deiſm; ſo I believe that He and *Democritus* too were compelled to it likewiſe by the neceſſity of their

Poſidon. apud *Ciceron. Plutarch.* &c.

Mr. *Des-Cartes.*

their own Syſtems. For ſeeing they explain'd the Phænomena of *Viſion*, *Imagination*, and *Thought* it ſelf, by certain thin fleeces of Atoms, that flow inceſſantly from the ſurfaces of bodies, and by their ſubtilty and fineneſs do penetrate any obſtacle, and yet retain the exact figures and lineaments of the ſeveral bodies from which they proceed; and in this manner inſinuating themſelves into the Eyes, and the Contexture of the Soul, do there produce and excite Senſation and Perception of themſelves: in conſequence therefore of this *Hypotheſis* they were obliged to maintain that we could have no Phantaſie, Idea or Conception of any thing, but what did really ſubſiſt either intire or in its ſeveral parts. Whence it followed, that mankind could have no imagination of *Jupiter* or *Mars*, of *Minerva* or *Iſis*; if there were not actually ſuch Beings in nature to emit thoſe *Effluvia*, which gliding into the Soul muſt beget ſuch an imagination. And thence it was, that thoſe Philoſophers adapted their deſcription of the Deity to the vulgar apprehenſions of thoſe times; Gods and Goddeſſes innumerable, and all of humane figure: becauſe otherwiſe the conceptions of mankind about them could not poſſibly

ſibly be accounted for from their Phyſiology. So that if *Epicurus* and *Democritus* were in earneſt about their Philoſophy, they did neceſſarily and really believe the *Exiſtence of the Gods.* But as to the nature and authority of them; they bereaved that *Jupiter* of his Thunder and Majeſty, forbidding him to look or peep abroad, ſo much as to enquire what News in the Infinite Space about him; but to content himſelf and be happy with an eternal lazineſs and dozing, unleſs ſome rambling Troops of *Atoms* upon the diſſolution of a neighbouring World might chance to awake him. Now becauſe no *Iſraelite* in the days of the *Pſalmiſt* is likely to have been ſo curious about natural Knowledge, as to believe the Being of God for ſuch a quaint and airy reaſon as this, when he had once boldly denied his Dominion over the World; and ſeeing that there is not now one Infidel living, ſo ridiculous as to pretend to ſolve the Phænomena of *Sight*, *Fancy* or *Cogitation* by thoſe fleeting ſuperficial films of bodies: I muſt beg leave to think that the *Fool in the Text* was a thorough confirmed *Atheiſt*; and that the modern diſguiſed *Deiſts* do only call themſelves ſo for the former reaſon of

Epicurus, to decline the publick odium and reſentment of the Magiſtrate; and do cover the moſt arrant Atheiſm under the mask and ſhadow of a Deity, by which they underſtand no more than ſome eternal inanimate Matter, ſome univerſal Nature, and Soul of the World, void of all ſenſe and cogitation, endued with none at all, much leſs with Infinite Wiſedom and Goodneſs; and therefore in this preſent Diſcourſe they may deſervedly come under that Character which the Text hath given of them, of *Fools that have ſaid in their Hearts, There is no God.*

And now having thus far cleared our way; in the next place we ſhall offer ſome notorious Proofs of the groſs *Folly* and ſtupidity of Atheiſts.

If a Perſon that had a fair Eſtate in reverſion, which in all probability he would ſpeedily be poſſeſs'd of, and of which he might reaſonably promiſe to himſelf a long and happy Enjoyment, ſhould be aſſured by ſome skilfull Phyſician; That in a very ſhort time he would inevitably fall into a Diſeaſe, that would ſo totally deprive him of his Underſtanding and Memory, that he ſhould loſe the

the knowledge of all things without him, nay all conſciouſneſs and ſenſe of his own Perſon and Being: If, I ſay, upon a certain belief of this indication, the man ſhould appear overjoyed at the News, and be mightily tranſported with the diſcovery and expectation; would not all that ſaw him be aſtoniſhed at ſuch behaviour? Would they not be forward to conclude that the Diſtemper had ſeized him already, and that even then the miſerable Creature was become a meer *Fool* and an Idiot? Now the Carriage of our *Atheiſts* or *Deiſts* is infinitely more amazing than this; no dotage ſo infatuate, no phrenſie ſo extravagant as theirs. They have been educated in a *Religion*, that inſtructed them in the knowledge of a *Supreme Being*; a Spirit moſt excellently glorious, ſuperlatively Powerfull and Wiſe and Good, Creator of all things out of nothing; That hath endued the Sons of Men, his peculiar Favorites, with a Rational Spirit, and hath placed them as Spectators in this noble Theatre of the World, to view and applaud theſe glorious Scenes of Earth and Heaven, the workmanſhip of his hands; That hath furniſhed them in general with a ſufficient ſtore of all things, either ne-

ceſſary or convenient for life; and particularly to ſuch as fear and obey him, hath promiſed a ſupply of all wants, a deliverance
Pſal. 34. 9. and protection from dangers: *That they that ſeek him, ſhall want no manner of thing that is good.* And beſides his munificence to them
Joh. 3. 16. in this life; He *ſo loved the world, that he ſent his Onely-begotten Son*, the expreſs Image of his Subſtance, and Partaker of his eternal Na-
2 Tim. 1. 10. ture and Glory, to *bring Life and Immortality to light*, and to tender them to Mankind upon fair and gracious Terms; That if they
Matt. 11. 30. ſubmitted to his *eaſie yoke and light burthen*, and obſerved his Commandments *which are*
1 Joh. 5. 3. *not grievous*, He then gave them *the promiſe*
Heb. 5. 9. *of eternal Salvation*; He had *reſerved for them*
1 Pet. 1. 4. *in Heaven an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*; He had *prepared* for them an unſpeakable, unconceivable Perfection of Joy and Bliſs, *things that*
1 Cor. 2. 9. *eye had not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man.* What a delightfull and raviſhing *Hypotheſis* of Religion is this? And in this Religion they have had their Education. Now let us ſuppoſe ſome great Profeſſor in Atheiſm to ſuggeſt to ſome of theſe; That all this is a meer dream and impo-

impoſture; that there is no ſuch excellent Being, as they ſuppoſe, that created and preſerves them; that all about them is dark ſenſeleſs Matter, driven on by the blind impulſes of Fatality and Fortune; that men firſt ſprung up, like Muſhroms, out of the mud and ſlime of the Earth; and that all their Thoughts, and the whole of what they call Soul, are only various Action and Repercuſſion of ſmall particles of Matter, kept a-while a moving by ſome Mechaniſm and Clock-work, which finally ceaſes and periſhes by death. If it be true then (as we daily find it is) that they liſten with complacency to theſe horrid Suggeſtions; if they let go their hope of Everlaſting Life with willingneſs and joy; if they entertain the thoughts of final Perdition with exultation and triumph; ought they not to be eſteem'd moſt notorious *Fools*, even deſtitute of common ſenſe, and abandon'd to a callouſneſs and numneſs of Soul? Ἄθεον καὶ ἄλογον καὶ ἀναίσθητον γένος. Max. Tyr. *Diſſ.* 1.

What then, is Heaven it ſelf with its *pleaſures for evermore* to be parted with ſo unconcernedly? Is a *Crown of Righteouſneſs*, a *Crown of Life*, to be ſurrendred with laughter? Is an *exceeding and eternal weight of Glory* too light

2 Tim. 4. 8. Jam. 1. 12.

2 Cor. 4. 17.

light in the balance againſt the hopeleſs death of the Atheiſt, and utter extinction? 'Twas a noble ſaying of the Emperor *Marcus*, That he would not endure to live one day in the world, if he did not believe it to be under the government of Providence. Let us but imagin that excellent Perſon confuted and ſatisfied by ſome *Epicurean* of his time; that All was but *Atoms*, and *Vacuum*, and *Neceſſity*, and *Chance*. Would He have been ſo pleaſed and delighted with the conviction? would He have ſo triumph'd in being overcome? or rather, as he hath told us, would he not have gone down with ſorrow and deſpair to the grave? Did I but once ſee an Atheiſt lament and bewail himſelf; That upon a ſtrict and impartial examination he had found to his coſt, that all was a miſtake; that the Prerogative of Human Nature was vaniſhed and gone; thoſe glorious hopes of Immortality and Bliſs, nothing but cheating Joys and pleaſant Deluſions; that he had undone himſelf by loſing the comfortable Error, and would give all the World to have better arguments for Religion: there would be great hopes of prevailing upon ſuch an Atheiſt as this. But, alas! there are none of them

them of this temper of mind; there are none that *underſtand and ſeek after God*; they have *no knowledge*, nor any deſire of inſtruction; they *thruſt the Word of God from them, and judge themſelves unworthy of everlaſting life*; they willingly prefer Darkneſs before Light; and obſtinately chooſe to periſh for ever in the Grave, rather than be Heirs of Salvation in the Reſurrection of the Juſt. Theſe certainly are the *Fools* in the Text, indocil intractable Fools, whoſe ſtolidity can baffle all arguments, and is proof againſt Demonſtration it ſelf; *whoſe end* (as the words of St. *Paul* do truly deſcribe them) *whoſe end is deſtruction*, an eternal Deprivation of Being; *whoſe God is their belly*, the gratification of ſenſual Luſts; *whoſe Glory is in their ſhame*, in the debaſing and villanizing of Mankind to the condition of Beaſts; *who mind earthly things*, who if (like that great Apoſtle) they were *caught up to the third Heaven*, would (as the Spyes did of *Canaan*) *bring down an evil report* of thoſe Regions of Bliſs. And I fear, unleſs it pleaſe God by extraordinary methods *to help their unbelief, and enlighten the eyes of their underſtanding*; they will carry their Atheiſm with them to the Pit; and the flames of Hell only muſt convince them of their Error.

v. 2. of this Pſalm. ver. 4. Act. 13. 46. Phil. 3. 19. 2 Cor. 12. 2. Num. 13. 32. Mar. 9. 24. Eph. 1. 19.

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This ſupine and inconſiderate behaviour of the Atheiſts is ſo extremely abſurd, that it would be deem'd incredible, if it did not occurr to our daily Obſervation; it proclames aloud, that they are not led aſtray by their Reaſoning, but led captive by their Luſts to the denial of God. When the very pleaſures of Paradiſe are contemn'd and trampled on, like Pearls caſt before Swine; there's ſmall hope of reclaiming them by arguments of Reaſon. But however, as *Solomon* adviſeth, we will anſwer theſe *Fools not according to their Folly, leſt we alſo be like unto them.* It is expedient that we *put to ſilence the ignorance of theſe fooliſh men*, that Believers may be the more confirmed and more reſolute in the Faith.

Prov. 26. 4.

Did Religion beſtow Heaven without any terms or conditions indifferently upon all; if the *Crown of Life* was hereditary, and free to Good and Bad; and not ſettled by Covenant upon the Elect of God only, ſuch as *live ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent world:* I believe there would be no ſuch thing as an Infidel among us. And without controverſie 'tis the Way and Means of attaining to Heaven, that makes profane Scorn-

Tit. 2. 12.

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ers ſo willingly let go the Expectation of it. 'Tis not the Articles of the Creed, but the Duty to God and their Neighbour, that is ſuch an inconſiſtent incredible Legend. They will not practiſe the Rules of Religion, and therefore they cannot believe the Promiſes and Rewards of it.

But however, let us ſuppoſe them to have acted like rational and ſerious Men: and perhaps upon a diligent inquiſition they have found, that the Hope of Immortality deſerves to be *joyfully* quitted, and that either out of *Intereſt*, or *Neceſſity* which is both.

I. And firſt, One may conceive indeed, how there might poſſibly be a *neceſſity* of quitting it. It might be tied to ſuch Terms, as would render it impoſſible ever to be obtain'd. For example, if it ſhould be required of all the Candidates of Glory and Immortality, to give a full and knowing Aſſent to ſuch things as are repugnant to Common Senſe, as contradict the κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι, the univerſal Notions and indubitable Maxims of Reaſon; if they were to believe, that One and the ſame Thing may *be* and *not be* at the ſame time and in the ſame reſpect; If allowing the received Idea's and denominations

of Numbers and Figures and Body, they muſt ſeriouſly affirm, that Two and two do make a Dozen, or that the Diameter of a Circle is as long as the Circumference, or that *the ſame Body may be all of it in diſtant places at once.* I muſt confeſs that the offers of Happineſs upon ſuch Articles of Belief as theſe, would be meer tantalizing of Rational Creatures; and the Kingdom of Heaven would become the Inheritance of only Idiots and Fools. For whilſt a man of Common Capacity doth think and reflect upon ſuch Propoſitions; he cannot poſſibly bribe his Underſtanding to give a Verdict for their Truth. So that he would be quite fruſtrated of the Hope of Reward, upon ſuch unpracticable Conditions as theſe: neither could he have any evidence of the Reality of the Promiſe, ſuperior to what he is conſcious to of the Falſity of the Means. Now if any Atheiſt can ſhew me in the Syſtem of Chriſtian Religion any ſuch abſurdities and repugnancies to our natural Faculties; I will either evince them to be Interpolations and Corruptions of the Faith, or yield my ſelf a Captive and a Proſelyte to his Infidelity.

II. Or,

II. Or, 2dly, they may think 'tis the *Intereſt* of Mankind, that there ſhould be no Heaven at all; becauſe the Labour to acquire it is more worth than the Purchaſe: God Almighty (if there be one) having much overvalued the Bleſſings of his Preſence. So that upon a fair eſtimation, 'tis a greater advantage to take one's ſwing in Senſuality, and have a glut of Voluptuouſneſs in this life, freely reſigning all pretences to future Happineſs; which, when a man is once extinguiſh'd by Death, he cannot be ſuppoſed either to want or deſire: than to be tied up by Commandments and Rules ſo thwart and contrary to Fleſh and Blood; to *take up one's Croſs, to deny himſelf*, and refuſe the Satisfaction of Natural Deſires. This indeed is the true Language of Atheiſm, and the Cauſe of it too. Were not this at the bottom, no man in his wits could contemn and ridicule the expectation of Immortality. Now what power or influence can Religion have upon the minds of theſe men; while not only their Affections and Luſts, but their ſuppoſed Intereſt ſhall plead againſt it? But if we can once ſilence this powerfull Advocate; we ſhall without much difficulty carry the Cauſe at the Bar of impartial Reaſon. Mark 8. 34.

Now here is a notorious inſtance of the *Folly* of Atheiſts, that while they repudiate all Title to the Kingdom of Heaven, meerly for the preſent Pleaſure of Body, and their boaſted Tranquillity of Mind; beſides the extreme madneſs in running ſuch a deſperate Hazard after Death, (which I will not now treat of) they unwittingly deprive themſelves here of that very Pleaſure and Tranquillity they ſeek for. For I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew, That Religion it ſelf gives us the greateſt Delights and Advantages even in this Life alſo, though there ſhould prove in the event to be no Reſurrection to another. *Her ways are ways of*
Prov. 3. 17. *pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.*

But before I begin that, I muſt occurr to one ſpecious Objection both againſt this Propoſition and the paſt part of my diſcourſe; Namely, that Religion doth perpetually haunt and diſquiet us with diſmal apprehenſions of everlaſting Burnings in Hell; and that there is no ſhelter nor refuge from thoſe Fears, but behind the Principles of Atheiſm.

(1.) Firſt therefore I will freely acknowledge to the Atheiſts; that ſome part of what hath been ſaid is not directly concluſive againſt

gainſt them; if they ſay, that before they revolted from the Faith, they had ſinned away all expectation of ever arriving at Heaven: and conſequently had good reaſon ſo *joyfully* to receive the news of Annihilation by Death, as an advantageous change for the everlaſting torments of the Damn'd. But becauſe I cannot expect, that they will make ſuch a ſhameleſs and ſenſeleſs Confeſſion, and ſupply us with that invincible argument againſt themſelves: I muſt ſay again, that to prefer final Extinction before a happy Immortality does declare the moſt deplorable ſtupidity of mind. Nay although they ſhould confeſs, that they believed themſelves to be Reprobates, before they disbelieved Religion; and took Atheiſm as a ſanctuary and refuge from the Terrors of Hell: yet ſtill the imputation of *Folly* will ſtick upon them: in as much as they choſe Atheiſm as an Opiate to ſtill thoſe frightening Apprehenſions, by inducing a dulneſs and lethargy of mind; rather than to make uſe of that active and ſalutary medicine, a hearty Repentance; that they did not know the *Riches of the goodneſs and forbearance and long-ſuffering of God*, and that a ſincere Amend- Rom. 2. 4.
ment of Life was never too late nor in vain;

1 Tim. 4. 10. vain; *Jesus Christ being the Saviour of all men,*
1 Joh. 5. 14. and a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world;*
1 Tim. 1. 15. *who came into the world to save sinners, even the*
Rom. 5. 6, 10 *chief of them all; and died for the ungodly, and his bittereſt enemies.*

(2.) And ſecondly, As to the *Fears of Damnation*; thoſe terrors are not to be charged upon Religion it ſelf, which proceed either from the Want of Religion, or Superſtitious miſtakes about it. For as an honeſt and innocent Man doth know the puniſhments, which the Laws of his Country denounce againſt Felons and Murtherers and Traytors, without being terrified or concern'd at them: So a Chriſtian in truth as well as in name, though he believe the conſuming Vengeance prepared for the diſobedient and unbelievers, is not at all diſmayed at the apprehenſions of it. Indeed it adds ſpurs, and gives wings to his diligence,
Phil. 2. 12. it excites him to *work out his Salvation with fear and trembling*; a religious and ingenuous fear, that is temper'd with hope and with love and unſpeakable joy. But he knows, that if he fears him who is *able to deſtroy both ſoul and*
Matt. 10. 28. *body in Hell*, he needs not fear that his own ſoul or body ſhall ever go thither.

I al-

I allow that ſome debauched and profligate Wretches, or ſome deſigning perfidious Hypocrites, that are religious in outward profeſſion, but *corrupt and abominable* in their works, are moſt juſtly as well as uſually liable to theſe horrours of mind. 'Tis not my buſineſs to defend or excuſe ſuch as theſe; I muſt leave them, as long as they keep their *hardneſs and impenitent Hearts*, to thoſe gnawing and excruciating Fears, thoſe whips of the Divine *Nemeſis*, that frequently ſcourge even Atheiſts themſelves. For they alſo can never wholly extinguiſh theſe horrible forbodings of Conſcience. A thouſand occaſions do awake the ſleeping Tormentors. Any ſlight Conſideration either of themſelves, or of any thing without; whatſoever they think on, or whatſoever they look on; all do adminiſter ſome reaſons for ſuſpicion and diffidence, leſt poſſibly they may be in the wrong; and then 'tis a *fearfull thing to fall into the hands of the living God: There are they in great fear*, as 'tis in the 5th. verſe of this *Pſalm*, under terrible preſages of *judgment and fiery indignation*. Neither can they ſay, That theſe Terrors, like Tales about Spectres, may diſturb ſome ſmall Pretenders and puny Novices,

Heb. 10. 31.

Heb. 10. 27.

ces, but dare not approach the *vere Adepti*, the Maſters and Rabbies of Atheiſm. For 'tis well known both from ancient and modern Experience, that the very boldeſt of them out of their Debauches and Company, when they chance to be ſurpriſed with Solitude or Sickneſs, are the moſt ſuſpicious and timorous and deſpondent Wretches in the world: and that the boaſted Happy Atheiſt in the Indolence of body, and an undiſturbed Calm and Serenity of mind, is altogether as rare a Creature, as the *Vir Sapiens* was among the *Stoics*; whom they often met with in Idea and Deſcription, in Harangues and in Books, but freely own'd that he never had or was like to exiſt actually in Nature.

Cic. Plutarch.&c.

And now as to the preſent advantages, which we owe to *Religion*, they are very conſpicuous; whether we conſider Mankind (1.) *Separately*, or (2.) under *Society* and *Government*.

1. And firſt, in a *Single Capacity*. How is a good Chriſtian animated and cheer'd by a ſtedfaſt belief of the Promiſes of the Goſpel; of an everlaſting enjoyment of perfect Felicity, ſuch as after millions of millions of Ages is ſtill youthfull and flouriſhing and inviting as at

at the firſt? no wrinkles in the face, no gray hairs on the head of Eternity; no end, no diminution, no ſatiety of thoſe delights. What a warm and vigorous influence does a Religious heart feel from a firm expectation of theſe Glories? Certainly this Hope alone is of ineſtimable value; 'tis a kind of anticipation and pledge of thoſe Joys; and at leaſt gives him one Heaven upon Earth, though the other ſhould prove a Deluſion. Now what are the mighty Promiſes of Atheiſm? let us know the glorious Recompences it propoſeth; Utter Extinction and Ceſſation of Being; to be reduced to the ſame condition, as if we never had been born. O diſmal reward of Infidelity! at which Nature does ſhrink and ſhiver with horror. What ſome of the * Learnedeſt Doctors among the *Jews* have eſteem'd the moſt dreadfull of all Puniſhment, and have aſſigned for the portion of the blackeſt Criminals of the Damn'd; ſo interpreting *Tophet*, *Abaddon*, *the Vale of Slaughter* and the like, for final Exciſion and Deprivation of Being: this Atheiſm exhibits to us, as an Equivalent to Heaven. We all know what hath been diſputed among Schoolmen to this effect. And 'tis an obſervation

* *Vide* Pocockii *Notas ad Portam* Moſis, *p.* 158, *&c.*

Plutarch. Ὅτι οὐδὲ ζῆν, &c. *p.* 1104, 1105. *Ed.* Ruald.

of *Plutarch*, that the Generality of mankind πάντες καὶ πᾶσαι, as well Women as Men, choſe rather to endure all the Puniſhments of Hell, as deſcribed by the Poets; than part with the Hope of Immortality, though immortal only in miſery. I eaſily grant, that this would be a very hard Bargain; and that *Not to be at all*, is more eligible, than *to be miſerable always:* our Saviour himſelf having determin'd the queſtion; *Wo to that man, by whom the Son of Man is betrayed; good were it for that man, if he had never been born.* But however thus much it evidently ſhews, That this deſire of Exiſtence is a natural Affection of the Soul; 'tis *Self-preſervation* in the higheſt and trueſt meaning; 'tis interwoven in the very Frame and Conſtitution of Man. How then can the Atheiſt reflect on his own *Hypotheſis* without extreme ſorrow and dejection of Spirit? Will he ſay, that when once he is dead, this Deſire will be nothing; and that he that is not, cannot lament his Annihilation? So indeed it will be according to his Principles. But notwithſtanding, while he continues in Life (which we now ſpeak of) this dusky Scene of Horror, this melancholy Proſpect of final Perdition will frequently occurr to his Fancy;

Mar. 14. 2.

Fancy; the ſweeteſt Enjoyments of Life will often become flat and inſipid, will be damp'd and extinguiſh'd, be bitter'd and poiſon'd by the malignant and venomous quality of this Opinion.

Is it not more comfortable to a man, to think well of himſelf, to have a high Value and Conceit of the Dignity of his Nature, to believe a noble Origination of his Race, the Off-ſpring and Image of the great King of Glory: rather than that men firſt proceeded, as Vermin are thought to do, by the ſole influence of the Sun out of Dirt and Putrefaction?

Is it not a firmer foundation for Contentment and Tranquillity, to believe that All things were at firſt created, and are continually order'd and diſpoſed for the Beſt, and that principally for the Benefit and Pleaſure of Man; than that the whole Univerſe is meer bungling and blundering; no Art or Contrivance to be ſeen in't; nothing effected for any purpoſe and deſign; but all ill-favouredly cobled and jumbled together by the unguided agitation and rude ſhuffles of Matter?

Can any man wiſh a better Support under affliction, than the Friendſhip and Favour of Omnipotence, of Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs; who is both able, and willing, and knows how to relieve him? Such a man *can* Phil. 4. 13. *do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth him*, he can patiently ſuffer all things with cheerfull ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the Divine Will. He has a ſecret Spring of ſpiritual Joy, and the continual Feaſt of a good Conſcience within, that forbid him to be miſerable. But what a forlorn deſtitute Creature is the Atheiſt in Diſtreſs? He hath no friend in Extremity, but Poiſon or a Dagger or a Halter or a Precipice. A violent Death is the laſt refuge of the *Epicureans*, as well as Lib. 3. the *Stoics*. This, ſays *Lucretius*, is the diſtinguiſhing Character of a genuine Son of our Sect, that he will not endure to live in Exile and Want and Diſgrace out of a vain fear of death; but diſpatch himſelf reſolutely into the State of eternal Sleep and Inſenſibility. And yet for all this ſwaggering, not one of a hundred hath boldneſs enough to follow the Direction. The baſe and degenerous Saying of one of them is very well known; * That *Life* is always *ſweet*, and he ſhould ſtill

* Mecænas *apud* Senec. *Ep.* 101. *Debilem facito Manu; debilem pede, coxa: &c.*

ſtill deſire to prolong it; though, after he had been maim'd and diſtorted by the Rack, he ſhould laſtly be condemn'd to hang on a Gibbet.

And then, as to the *Practical Rules* and Duties of Religion: as the Miracles of our Lord are peculiarly eminent above the *Lying Wonders* of *Demons*, in that they were not made out of vain Oſtentation of Power, and to raiſe unprofitable Amazement; but for the real Benefit and Advantage of men, by feeding the Hungry, healing all ſorts of Diſeaſes, ejecting of Devils, and reviving the Dead: ſo likewiſe the Commands which he hath impoſed on his Followers are not like the abſurd Ceremonies of *Pagan* Idolatry, the frivolous Rites of their Initiations and Worſhip, that might look like Incantation and Magick, but had no tendency in their Nature to make Mankind the happier. Our Saviour hath enjoyn'd us a *Reaſonable ſervice*; Rom. 12. 1. accommodated to the rational part of our nature. All his Laws are in themſelves, abſtracted from any Conſideration of Recompence, conducible to the Temporal Intereſt of them that obſerve them. For what can be more availing to a man's Health, or his Credit,

Credit, or Eſtate, or Security in this world, than Charity and Meekneſs, than Sobriety and Temperance, than Honeſty and Diligence in his Calling? Do not Pride and Arrogance infallibly meet with Contempt? Do not Contentiouſneſs and Cruelty and Study of Revenge ſeldom fail of Retaliation? Are not Envious and Covetous, Diſcontented and Anxious minds tormenters to themſelves? Do not we ſee, that Slothfull and Intemperate and Incontinent perſons deſtroy their Bodies with diſeaſes, their Reputations with diſgrace, and their Families with want? Are Adultery and Fornication forbidden only by *Moſes* and *Chriſt*? or do not *Heathen* Law-givers puniſh ſuch Enormities with Fines, or Impriſonment, with Exile, or Death? 'Twas an objection of *Julian* the Apoſtate; that there were no new Precepts of Morality in our Religion: *Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not covet thy neighbours wife.* Why all the World, ſays he, is agreed about theſe Commandments: and in every Country under Heaven, there are Laws and Penalties made to enforce all the Ten, excepting only the *Sabbath* and *the Worſhip of ſtrange Gods.* We can anſwer *him* another way; but he may

Julianus *apud* Cyrillum, *p.* 134.

may make our Infidels aſhamed to complain of thoſe Ordinances as hard Impoſitions, which the ſenſe of all Nations has thought to be reaſonable: which not only the Philoſophers of *Greece* and *Italy* and the ancient World; but the Banians of *Mogul*, the Talapoins of *Siam*, the Mandarins of *China*, the Moraliſts of *Peru* and *Mexico*, all the Wiſdom of Mankind have declared to be neceſſary Duties. Nay if the Atheiſts would but live up to the Ethics of *Epicurus* himſelf, they would make few or no Proſelytes from the Chriſtian Religion. None revolt from the Faith for ſuch things, as are thought peculiar to Chriſtianity; Not becauſe they muſt *love and pray for their enemies*, but becauſe they muſt not poiſon or ſtab them: not becauſe they muſt not *look upon a Woman to luſt after her*, but becauſe they are much more reſtrain'd from the Perpetration of their Luſts. If wanton glances and libidinous thoughts had been permitted by the Goſpel, they would have apoſtatized nevertheleſs. This we may conjecture from what *Plato* and others have told us, that it was commonly ἀκρασίαν ἡδονῶν καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν, their immoderate Affections and Luſts, that in the very times of Paganiſm induced

Matt. 5. 44.

ver. 28.

Plato *de Legib. lib.* 10. *p.* 886. *Ed.* Steph.

duced men to be Atheists. It seems their impure and brutal Sensuality was too much confined by the Religion of *those* Countries, where even *Venus* and *Bacchus* had their Temples. Let not therefore voluptuous Atheists lay all the fault of their Sins upon the Infirmity of Human Nature; nor plead that Flesh and Blood cannot resist those Temptations, which have all their force and prevalence from long Custom and inveterated Habit. What enticement, what pleasure is there in common profane Swearing? yet neither the fear of God nor of the Law will persuade men to leave it. 'Tis prevailing Example that hath now made it fashionable, but it hath not always been so, nor will be hereafter. So other Epidemical Vices, they are rife and predominant only for a season, and must not be ascribed to Human Nature in the Lump. In some Countries Intemperance is a necessary part of Conversation; in others Sobriety is a Vertue universal, without any respect to the Duties of Religion. Nor can they say, that this is only the difference of Climate, that inclines one Nation to Concupiscence and Sensual Pleasures; another to Blood-thirstiness and Desire of Revenge. It would discover great ignorance

rance in Hiſtory, not to know that in all Climates a whole People has been over-run with ſome recently invented or newly imported kind of Vice, which their Grandfathers never knew. In the lateſt Accounts of the Country of *Guiana*, we are told that the eating of Human Fleſh is the beloved pleaſure of thoſe Savages: two Nations of them by mutual devouring are reduced to two handfulls of men. When the Goſpel of our Saviour was preached to them, they received it with gladneſs of heart; they could be brought to forgo Plurality of Wives; though that be the main impediment to the converſion of the *Eaſt-Indies*. But the great Stumbling-block with theſe *Americans*, and the only Rock of Offence was the forbidding them *to eat their Enemies*: That irreſiſtable Temptation made them quickly to revolt and relapſe into their Infidelity. What, muſt we impute this to the temperature of the Air, to the nature of the Soil, to the influence of the Stars? Are theſe *Barbarians* of man-eating Conſtitutions, that they ſo hanker after this Diet, which we cannot imagin without horror? Is not the ſame thing practiſed in other parts of that Continent? Was it not ſo in *Europe* of old, and is

it not now ſo in *Africa?* If an Eleventh Commandment had been given, *Thou ſhalt not eat Human Fleſh*; would not theſe Canibals have eſteem'd it more difficult than all the Ten? And would not they have really had as much reaſon as our Atheiſts, to plead the power of the Temptation, and the propenſity of Fleſh and Blood? how impudent are they then, that traduce the eaſie and gracious Conditions of the Goſpel for Unreaſonable and Tyrannical Impoſitions? *Are not God's ways equal,* O ye Children of Deſtruction, *and are not your ways unequal?*

II. Secondly and laſtly, As to the benign Influence of Religion upon *Communities* and Governments, *habemus confitentes Reos*; 'tis ſo apparent and unqueſtionable, that 'tis one of the wiſe Objections of the Atheiſt, That it firſt was contrived and introduced by Politicians to bring the wild and ſtragling Herds of Mankind under Subjection and Laws. *Out of thy own mouth ſhalt thou be judged thou wicked ſervant.* Thou ſay'ſt that the wiſe Inſtitutors of Government, Souls elevated above the ordinary pitch of men, thought Religion neceſſary to Civil Obedience. Why then doſt thou endeavour to undermine this foundation,

Luk. 19. 22.

tion, to undo this Cement of Society, and to reduce all once again to thy imaginary State of Nature and Original Confuſion? No Community ever was or can be begun or maintain'd, but upon the Baſis of Religion. What Government can be imagin'd without Judicial Proceedings? and what methods of Judicature without a Religious Oath; which implies and ſuppoſes an Omniſcient Being, as conſcious to its falſhood or truth, and a revenger of Perjury? So that the very nature of an Oath (and therefore of Society alſo) is ſubverted by the Atheiſt; who profeſſeth to acknowledge nothing ſuperiour to himſelf, no omnipreſent obſerver of the actions of men. For an * Atheiſt to compoſe a *Syſtem* of *Politicks* is as abſurd and ridiculous, as *Epicurus*'s Sermons were about † *Sanctity* and *Religious Worſhip*. But there was hope, that the Doctrine of abſolute uncontroulable Power and the formidable name of *Leviathan* might flatter and bribe the Government into a *toleration of Infidelity*. We need have no recourſe to notion and ſuppoſition; we have ſad experience and convincing example before us, what a rare Conſtitution of Government may be had in a whole Nation of A-

* Hobbes *de Cive*, *Leviathan*.

† Περὶ Ὁσιότητος, Laert. *De ſanctitate & de pietate adverſus Deos*. Cic.

De Laet. *p.* 34, 47, 50. *Voyage du Sieur de Champlain. p.* 28. & 93.

theiſts. The Natives of *Newfoundland* and *New France* in *America*, as they are *ſaid* to live without any ſenſe of Religion, ſo they are *known* to be deſtitute of its advantages and bleſſings; without any Law or form of Community; without any Literature or Sciences or Arts; no Towns, no fixed Habitations, no Agriculture, no Navigation. And 'tis entirely owing to the power of Religion, that the whole World is not at this time as barbarous as they. And yet I ought not to have called theſe miſerable Wretches *a Nation of Atheiſts.* They cannot be ſaid to be of the Atheiſt's opinion; becauſe they have no opinion at all in the matter: They do not ſay in their hearts, *There is no God*; for they never once deliberated, if there was one or no. They no more *deny* the Exiſtence of a Deity; than they deny the *Antipodes*, the *Copernican Syſtem*, or the *Satellites Jovis:* about which they have had no notion nor conception at all. 'Tis the *Ignorance* of thoſe poor Creatures, and not their *Impiety: their* Ignorance as much to be pitied, as the Impiety of the *Atheiſts* is to be deteſted and puniſh'd. 'Tis of mighty importance to the Government, to put ſome timely ſtop to the ſpreading Contagion of this *Peſtilence that walketh*

walketh by day, that dares to diſperſe its curſed ſeeds and principles in the face of the Sun. The *Fool* in the Text had only ſaid *in his heart, There is no God:* he had not ſpoken it aloud, nor openly blaſphem'd in places of publick reſort. There's too much reaſon to fear, that ſome of all orders of men, even Magiſtracy it ſelf, have taken the Infection: a thing of dreadfull conſequence and moſt imminent danger. *Epicurus* was *not a little* wiſer than ordinary, when he ſo earneſtly adviſed his Diſciples againſt medling in publick affairs: He knew the nature and tendency of his own Philoſophy; that it would ſoon become ſuſpected and odious to a Government, if ever Atheiſts were employed in places of Truſt. But becauſe he had made one great Rule ſuperior to all, *That every man's only Good was pleaſure of Body and contentment of Mind:* hence it was that men of ambitious and turbulent Spirits, that were diſſatisfied and uneaſie with Privacy and Retirement, were allowed by his own Principle to engage in matters of State. And there they generally met with that fortune, which their Maſter foreſaw. Several Cities of *Greece* that had made experiment of them in Publick Concerns, drove them out, as Incendiaries and Peſts of Commonweals,

Plutarch. Λάθε βιώσας. Lucret. &c.

Plutarch. Ὅτι οὐδὲ ἡδέως ζῆν. Cic. &c.

monweals, by ſevere Edicts and Proclamations. Atheiſm is by no means tolerable in the moſt private condition: but if it aſpire to authority and power; if it acquire the Command of an Army or a Navy; if it get upon the Bench or into the Senate, or on a Throne: What then can be expected, but the baſeſt Cowardiſe and Treachery, but the fouleſt prevarication in Juſtice, but betraying and ſelling the Rights and Liberties of a People, but arbitrary Government and tyrannical Oppreſſion? Nay if Atheiſm were once, as I may ſay, the National Religion: it would make its own Followers the moſt miſerable of men; it would be the Kingdom of Satan divided againſt it ſelf; and the Land would be ſoon brought to deſolation. *Joſephus*, that knew them, hath inform'd us, that the Sadducees, thoſe Epicureans among the Jews, were not only rough and cruel to men of a different Sect from their own; but perfidious and inhuman one towards another. This is the genuine ſpirit and the natural product of Atheiſm. No man, that adheres to that narrow and ſelfiſh Principle, can ever be Juſt or Generous or Gratefull; * unleſs he be ſometime overcome by Good-nature and a happy Conſtitution. No Atheiſt, as

Joſephus *de Bello Judaico, l. 2. c. 12.*

* *Si ſibi ipſe conſentiat, & non interdum naturæ bonitate vincatur.* Cic. *de Offic. 1. 2.*

as ſuch, can be a true Friend, an affectionate Relation, or a loyal Subject. The appearance and ſhew of mutual Amity among them, is wholly owing to the ſmallneſs of their number, and to the obligations of a Faction. 'Tis like the Friendſhip of Pickpockets and Highwaymen, that are ſaid to obſerve ſtrict Juſtice among themſelves, and never to defraud a Comrade of his ſhare of the Booty. But if we could imagin a whole Nation to be Cutpurſes and Robbers; would there then be kept that ſquare-dealing and equity in ſuch a monſtrous *den of Thieves*? And if Atheiſm ſhould be ſuppoſed to become univerſal in this Nation (which ſeems to be deſign'd and endeavour'd, though we know the gates of Hell ſhall not be able to prevail) farewell all Ties of Friendſhip and Principles of Honour; all Love for our Countrey and Loyalty to our Prince; nay, farewell all Government and Society it ſelf, all Profeſſions and Arts, and Conveniences of Life, all that is laudable or valuable in the World.

And now having in the firſt place explained the Words of the *Text*, and ſecondly detected the mere *Deiſts* of our Age to be no better than diſguiſed *Atheiſts*, ſeeing they have now no pretence to the Deiſm of *Epicurus*; and afterwards having ſhown, that willingly to entertain the *Hypotheſis of Atheiſm* (which is literally *to chooſe Death and Evil, before Life and Good*, and *to love Darkneſs rather than Light*) is the moſt abſurd and inconſiderate *Folly*; and that there is nothing to excuſe ſo ſilly a Choice: Not any *Neceſſity* of it; for Religion doth not impoſe any Articles of Faith that are repugnant to our Faculties, and incredible to Natural Reaſon: Not *Intereſt*; becauſe Religion it ſelf is even in this Preſent Life the trueſt and beſt Intereſt as well of every *ſingle Perſon* (for a Chriſtian's Belief is the moſt comfortable, and his Hope the moſt glorious of all Men's, and the

Deut. 30. 15. Joh. 3. 19.

the Practical Duties he is obliged to, are in themselves agreeable to his Nature, and conducible to his Temporal Happiness) as of *Communities and Governments*; because Religion is not only usefull to Civil Society, but fundamentally necessary to its very Birth and Constitution: Having, I say, competently proved these Particulars, as far as the usual brevity of such Discourses will allow; I shall conclude all with one short Reflection, That if *Atheism* or modern *Deism* be evinced to be *Folly*, how great must that *Folly* be? It must not be bare *Folly*, but *Madness* and *Distraction*. Nor do we need to recurr to the *Stoical* Paradox, *That all Fools are mad*; Nor to that Saying of one of their own Party, who (not out of Derision, as some would have it, but out of Compliment to the Publick) call'd it *Insanientem sapientiam*, the *Mad* Philosophy of Atheism. For so sottishly to lose the purest Pleasures and Comforts of *this* World, and forgo the expectation of Immortality in *another*; and so desperately to run the Risk of *dwelling with everlasting Burnings*, it plainly discovers it self to be what it is; it is manifestly the most pernicious *Folly* and deplorable *Madness* in the World.

May the Father of Mercies and God of Infinite Wisedom reduce the Foolish *from their Errors, and make them* wise unto Salvation; *Confirm the Sceptical and wavering Minds, and so prevent Us, that stand fast, in all our doings, and further us with his continual help*, that we may not be of them that draw back unto Perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the Soul. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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